

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-18

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DRAFTED BY AF/S:DHSIMPSON:JK

APPROVED BY AF/S:JWFOLEY

AF/P:JALINEHAN (DRAFT)

AFR/SAF:EAGALES (DRAFT)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

INFO AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

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E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: EAIDPFOR, BC, SF

SUBJECT:BOTZAM ROAD: "AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL" ARTICLE

REF.: NAIROBI 6289

1. DEPT. HAS SEEN SEPT. 7 "AFRICA CONFIDENTIAL" ARTICLE ON BOTZAM ROAD DISCUSSED REFTEL. AT THIS TIME, WE DO NOT FEEL IT APPROPRIATE TO RESPOND TO ARTICLE UNLESS ASKED. NONETHELESS, ARTICLE'S CHARGES ARE SIMPLE TO MEET AND ADDRESSEES MAY WISH TO DRAW ON FOLLOWING POINTS, AS WELL AS THEIR OWN BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE OF BOTZAM ROAD PROJECT, IN RESPONDING TO ANY QUERIES OR COMMENTS ON ARTICLE.

2. CHOBE BY-PASS HAS BEEN SEEN FROM BEGINNING OF PROJECT
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AS FEEDER ROAD TO MAIN TRUNK ROAD LINKING CAPITALS OF ZAMBIA

AND BOTSWANA. IN THAT CAPACITY, IT LINKS BOTSWANA'S CHOBE GAME PARK, A GROWING TOURIST ATTRACTION, TO MAJOR ROAD NETWORK. CHOBE SPUR ALSO LINKS MAIN BOTZAM ROAD TO POPULATION AND ECONOMIC CENTERS IN NORTHERN BOTSWANA. SPUR REPLACES OLD TRACK THROUGH RIVER VALLEY IN GAME AREA, TRAFFIC ALONG WHICH WAS UPSETTING ECOLOGY OF AREA AND SCARING ANIMALS, MAJOR ATTRACTION OF CHOBE PARK.

3. FYI. FROM BEGINNING OF PROJECT GOB AND USG HAVE BEEN

AWARE THAT BOTZAM ROAD AND CHOBE SPUR HAVE POTENTIAL FOR FACILITATING SUPPLY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITY FORCES IN CAPRIVI STRIP IN ADDITION TO IMPROVING BOTSWANA'S ABILITY TO PATROL ITS BORDERS AGAINST INFILTRATORS. ROAD, OF COURSE, RUNS BOTH WAYS AND SOUTH AFRICAN INTEREST TO DATE HAS RATHER FOCUSSED ON POTENTIAL ROLE OF ROAD AS ROUTE FOR GUERRILLA FORCES DEEPER INTO SOUTHERN AFRICA. IN ADDITION, SA DECISION TO CONSTRUCT NEW ROAD FROM GROOTFONTEIN (NAMIBIA) TO KATIMA MULILO IN STRIP DOES NOT SUPPORT CONTENTION THAT SA SEES BOTZAM ROAD, INCLUDING CHOBE FEEDER ROAD, AS ITS SUPPLY ROUTE TO KATIMA MULILO. ARTICLE'S CHARGE THAT U.S. INTENTION IN BUILDING ROAD HAS ALL ALONG BEEN TO HELP SOUTH AFRICA IS NONSENSE, AS ADDRESSEES WHO PARTICIPATED IN PLANNING OF PROJECT ARE WELL AWARE. ADMITTEDLY, IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO EXTEND AID TO BLS COUNTRIES WITHOUT SOME BENEFIT ACCRUING TO SOUTH AFRICA, INASMUCH AS SOUTHERN AFRICA IS TO SOME EXTENT AN ECONOMICALLY INTERDEPENDENT AREA. KISINGER

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